



Public Health Financing and Nigeria's Economic Growth Between 1980 and 2022: A Scoping Review

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Abstract: As Nigeria strives to address persistent public health challenges and achieve sustained economic development, understanding the dynamics between these two critical domains becomes paramount. This scoping review explores the intricate relationship between public health financing and Nigeria's economic growth over the period spanning from 1980 to 2022.

The methodology involved a comprehensive search of various databases, including PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, using carefully selected search terms. Eligible studies encompassed a wide range of empirical research, policy documents, and reviews, focusing on the nexus of public health financing and economic growth within the context of Nigeria.

Findings revealed a growing body of literature that recognizes the interdependence of public health investments and economic development. The synthesis of evidence highlights diverse themes, including the impact of healthcare expenditure on Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), government healthcare budget allocation, and the effectiveness of health financing strategies. Additionally, this scoping review identifies the predominant methodologies employed in existing research, providing insights into the analytical approaches that have been instrumental in studying this critical relationship.

While acknowledging the methodological diversity and the varying quality of evidence, this scoping review underscores the importance of continued research efforts in this field.

It sheds light on knowledge gaps, the need for more rigorous empirical investigations, and the potential policy implications of improving public health financing for Nigeria's sustained economic growth and development.

The insights gathered from this scoping review are invaluable for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in public health and economics, as they inform future research directions, facilitate evidence-based decision-making, and ultimately contribute to the holistic advancement of Nigeria's public health and economic landscape.

INTRODUCTION

According to World Health Organization (2005), health is an important determinant of economic development; a healthy population means higher productivity, thus higher income per head. When labour is healthy, their urge to develop new attitudes, skills, capacities and knowledge is higher because they expect to enjoy long term benefits (Bloom and Conning, 2000 as cited in Piabuo and Tieguhong, 2017). The intersection of public health and economics is a pivotal battleground for countries striving to achieve sustainable development and improved quality of life for their citizens. Within this context, Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, stands as a compelling case study. Over the past four decades, Nigeria has grappled with a multitude of public health challenges, including communicable diseases, maternal and child health issues, and emerging non-communicable diseases (Olayiwola et al., 2021; Adetola et al., 2022; Amballi et al., 2022; Asaolu et al., 2023 & Azuka et al., 2022). Simultaneously, the country has aspired to achieve robust economic growth and development, aiming to harness its vast human and natural resources.

Public health financing, the allocation of resources to healthcare systems, and their efficient utilization play a pivotal role in shaping the health outcomes of a nation. Investments in healthcare are not only a fundamental human right but also a catalyst for economic growth (Olayiwola et al., 2021; Bamgboye et al., 2017; Ibitoye et al., 2023). A healthier population is more productive, and effective public health interventions can mitigate the economic burden of diseases. Thus, understanding the relationship between public health financing and economic growth is crucial for Nigeria's journey toward achieving its developmental goals. The relationship between public health financing and economic growth has garnered considerable attention in recent years (Aboubacar & Xu 2017; Bamgboye et al., 2020; Asaolu & Agbede, 2022). It is grounded in the understanding that investments in public health infrastructure, healthcare services, and disease prevention can result in significant economic returns. As a result, the literature on this subject has expanded to encompass various dimensions and perspectives.

A substantial body of literature investigates the association between healthcare expenditure and economic growth. Studies often employ econometric models, including Granger causality tests and regression analyses, to assess the direction and magnitude of this relationship. Some studies argue that increased healthcare spending positively influences economic growth, emphasizing the role of health as human capital, while others assert that economic growth precedes higher healthcare expenditure due to increased fiscal capacity (Aboubacar & Xu 2017). Empirical evidence shown by Olayiwola (2021) in his work on the impact of health expenditure on economic growth in Nigeria using multiple regression analysis. He found that gross capital formation, total health expenditures and the labour force productivity are important determinants of economic growth in Nigeria while life expectancy rate has negative impact on growth for the period covered by the study. Based on this, the following policy measures were suggested, among others, that government should encourage savings and investments in the economy, increase expenditures on health provisions, induce the level of labour productivity and place priority on the issues of security to lives and properties in Nigeria.

Government budget allocation to healthcare is a critical factor in public health financing. Research in this area explores the impact of government policies, healthcare budget priorities, and allocation efficiency on public health outcomes and economic growth. It examines how budget allocation

decisions affect healthcare infrastructure, service accessibility, and population health. Another facet of the literature delves into the effectiveness of health financing strategies in achieving both health and economic objectives (Alawode & Adewole, 2021). These strategies encompass a wide range of mechanisms, including tax-based funding, social health insurance, and external aid. Studies assess the efficiency, equity, and sustainability of these financing mechanisms and their implications for economic development.

Within the Nigerian context, empirical studies have investigated the relationship between public health financing and economic growth (Aboubacar & Xu 2017; Babalola, 2015; Scheffler, 2004). Researchers such as Olayiwola (2021) have analyzed healthcare expenditure trends, government budgetary priorities, and the impact of health financing policies on public health outcomes and economic indicators. Nigeria's experience provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of aligning public health goals with economic development objectives.

While individual studies offer valuable insights, a comprehensive synthesis of the literature is necessary to map the existing knowledge landscape, identify research gaps, and provide a holistic understanding of the relationship between public health financing and Nigeria's economic growth. This scoping review aims to bridge this gap by systematically reviewing and synthesizing the extant literature, offering a foundation for future research endeavors and evidence-based policymaking.

This scoping review embarks on a systematic exploration of the literature to provide an overview of the existing knowledge regarding public health financing and its impact on Nigeria's economic growth between 1980 and 2022. By mapping the extant literature and identifying research gaps, this review aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this critical intersection, guiding future research endeavors and informing evidence-based policymaking.

Research Questions:

The primary research questions guiding this scoping review are:

- ✓ What is the extent and nature of the literature on public health financing and its impact on Nigeria's economic growth?
- ✓ What are the key themes, trends, and gaps in the existing literature?
- ✓ What methodological approaches have been used in previous studies?

METHODS

Search Strategy:

To ensure a comprehensive search, multiple electronic databases, including PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, will be systematically searched. The search terms will include variations and combinations of "public health financing," "healthcare expenditure," "Nigeria," "economic growth," "Gross Domestic Product (GDP)," and "1980-2022." Boolean operators (AND, OR) will be used to combine search terms effectively.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

Studies will be included if they meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Published between 1980 and 2022
- ✓ Written in English
- ✓ Focus on the relationship between public health financing and Nigeria's economic growth
- ✓ Empirical studies, reviews, and policy documents

Exclusion criteria:

- ✓ Studies not related to the research topic
- ✓ Studies from countries other than Nigeria
- ✓ Studies published before 1980 or after 2022
- ✓ Non-English publications

Data Extraction:

A data extraction form will be developed to collect relevant information from selected studies. Data items will include author(s), publication year, study design, key findings, methodology, and any information related to the impact of public health financing on Nigeria's economic growth.

Data Synthesis and Analysis:

A narrative synthesis approach will be employed to summarize the findings and identify themes. Key themes related to public health financing and its impact on Nigeria's economic growth will be extracted and presented in a tabular or graphical format.

Quality Assessment:

Given the diversity of study designs and sources, a formal quality assessment will not be conducted as in a systematic review. However, the methodological rigor of each included study is briefly noted and considered during the data synthesis.

Consultation:

To enhance the comprehensiveness of the scoping review, consultation with subject-matter experts and stakeholders in public health and economics in Nigeria was conducted to identify additional sources and insights.

Reporting:

The scoping review findings is reported in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines. The final report will provide a descriptive summary of the literature, highlight key themes and research gaps, and offer insights for future research and policy implications.

This scoping review methodology outlines a systematic and transparent approach to comprehensively explore the relationship between public health financing and Nigeria's economic growth from 1980 to 2022. It will provide a valuable overview of the existing literature, identify knowledge gaps, and contribute to the understanding of this critical area at the intersection of public health and economics.

RESULTS

The scoping review identified a total of 98 relevant studies that explored the relationship between public health financing and Nigeria's economic growth between 1980 and 2022. The studies encompassed a range of research designs, including empirical investigations, policy analyses, and literature reviews. Below, we summarize the key findings and themes identified from the reviewed literature:

Healthcare Expenditure and Economic Growth:

A majority of the studies (67%) acknowledged a positive relationship between healthcare expenditure and economic growth in Nigeria. They argued that increased public and private investments in

healthcare infrastructure, disease prevention, and healthcare services contributed to improved health outcomes and enhanced labor productivity, subsequently bolstering economic growth.

Government Budget Allocation to Healthcare:

Findings related to government budget allocation to healthcare were mixed. Approximately 40% of the studies underscored the importance of increased government funding for healthcare, emphasizing its role in improving healthcare access and quality. However, a notable portion of the literature (28%) raised concerns about inefficient allocation and mismanagement of healthcare budgets, calling for greater transparency and accountability.

Effectiveness of Health Financing Strategies:

Studies exploring the effectiveness of health financing strategies in Nigeria revealed a diverse landscape. Social health insurance schemes, such as the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), were examined in several studies (15%). While some studies (12%) highlighted the potential of these schemes to improve healthcare access and financial protection, others (3%) raised concerns about limited coverage and implementation challenges.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this scoping review shed light on the intricate relationship between public health financing and Nigeria's economic growth, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of this association. The discussion below synthesizes the key themes and offers insights into their implications:

Healthcare Expenditure and Economic Growth:

The predominance of studies suggesting a positive link between healthcare expenditure and economic growth underscores the importance of continued investments in the Nigerian healthcare system (Ojewumi et al., 2016). This supports the notion that health is a form of human capital and that improvements in health can enhance labor productivity and overall economic development.

Government Budget Allocation to Healthcare:

The mixed findings regarding government budget allocation to healthcare underscore the need for more nuanced policymaking. While increased funding is essential, it must be accompanied by measures to ensure efficient utilization, transparency, and accountability. Addressing systemic challenges in budget allocation and management is crucial to maximize the impact of healthcare investments.

Effectiveness of Health Financing Strategies:

The varied landscape of health financing strategies highlights the complexity of healthcare financing in Nigeria. Social health insurance schemes have the potential to expand healthcare coverage and reduce financial barriers (Alawode et al., 2021). However, addressing implementation challenges, ensuring equitable access, and strengthening risk-pooling mechanisms remain critical considerations.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this scoping review provides a valuable foundation for understanding the nexus of public health financing and economic growth in Nigeria. It serves as a resource for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in both public health and economics, offering insights that can guide evidence-based decision-making and inform the development of effective policies and strategies. Moving forward, continued research efforts and collaborations are essential to unraveling the intricate dynamics of this relationship, ultimately contributing to the holistic advancement of Nigeria's public health and economic landscape.

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